

The Special City Council Meeting of August 17, 2020 was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

MAYOR

Mitch Thornton

OTHERS

Shannan Kinsley

Joni Baker

Ginger Burkholder

Donna Gottwald

Susan Sloan

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Geri Poss

Jennifer Nottingham

Kimberly Verity

Sean Skaggs

Susan Darst

Mayor Thornton declared a quorum with Council members Poss, Nottingham, Verity and Skaggs present. The meeting was started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. CONSIDER AND ACT ON ORDINANCE ORDERING A SPECIAL ELECTION ON NOVEMBER 3, 2020 FOR THE PURPOSE OF VOTING ON WHETHER TO INCREASE THE TAX RATE TO ADDRESS THE COST OF PROVIDING CITY-WIDE RECYCLING SERVICES

Mayor Thornton stated the reason for calling meeting giving everyone in the community the opportunity to vote and see if interested in raising the property tax. Stated that Council voted last August not to continue recycling until the fees go down or until there is a change. There has not been one yet, so thoughts were to put it up for a vote and see how many people are really interested in it. Last minute information that was received from City Attorney, Ryan Henry who informed that there is a July 17th deadline for taxes. Even if there was a voted today for a vote in November it would be nonbinding. We can put it on the Agenda for August 25th and look for other options other than citizens expecting the City to pay for recycling. Mayor Thornton does not feel that it is an option right now. Possibly look at what Kate Feist is looking at and address at that time.

Council Member Darst joined the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Citizens to be Heard:

Ginger Burkholder who lives on Hillside Drive. Thanked Mayor Thornton for explaining the background of why the meeting was called. Ginger is speaking for Kate Feist who is unable to attend. Kate made a detailed informative presentation at last Council meeting which was a preliminary presentation. Kate's intention was to come back on August 25th with continued research and options that might be available such as Grants and Programs funded that are utilized by other small Cities. We were taken back by the way the Agenda Item was worded about a tax increase because that was never ever considered or discussed. Not ever methodology by which we would accomplish recycling restoration in Grey Forest. Kate started with Next Door and that is a limited avenue of information sharing. Kate had 24 people that agreed they would pay \$20.00 a quarter for curbside pickup. Was too nebulous to contract with C6 to do so because out of those 24 people, if they dropped off, would change the price. Kate is continuing to research other options. Didn't feel like a vote was necessary at this time and does not want a tax increase at this time with economic uncertainty, depression, budget shortfalls and just not a good time.

Council member Nottingham stated that the last time she spoke with Kate she needed a sponsor from the City. She needs to partnership with someone from the City for further research. Ginger stated that her understanding is that she needs an official sanction of the City to give her more power than if she were acting independently as a citizen.

Donna Gottwald read aloud this letter from Kate Feist.

I want to thank you all for keeping Recycling issues alive and adding it to next month agenda. I wasn't sure where we left things so I spoke with Shannan and she is going to contact C-6 and ask George Cantu to present options. On my end, I have been in discussions with Rachel Herring of KTB, Keep Texas Beautiful. I was hoping she could present at this month's city council meeting but unfortunately, they have their annual conference that day so she'll be working with

me, in her place, and C-6 so we present together. She recommends GF become an KTB affiliate which would be me organizing a group of volunteers (like the road group) that would help facilitate best practices for waste management, through community awareness, education, and under KTB guidance. Joining KTB as a municipality makes us eligible for things like grants, donations and more. KTB programs address not only Recycling but Beautification and Waste Reduction. You can learn more about them here: <https://ktb.org/programs>. After sending Rachel a list of all GF variables including aging population, cost, and C-6 contract, she recommended the single stream option, (curbside or community bin). Obviously, there are budgetary concerns and education needs to consider and that is what C-6, KTB, Shannan and I will work on to present at the next city council meeting. In closing, I wanted to share with you one of KTB's success stories. Their affiliate, Keep Utopia Recycling, recycles 75% of their waste and 25% goes to the landfill. I visited them last week and was amazed!!!! According to KTB, the good news for us is, because we have access to AACOG and San Antonio, we can achieve the same net effect as Utopia, but with less hands on effort. Please click on the highlighted links below and take 30 seconds to see what is possible.

<http://www.keeputopiabeautiful.org/uopia-recycles.html>

<http://www.keeputopiabeautiful.org/news.html>

Thanks for your time and efforts.

Susan Sloan stated she agrees with what the previous speaker said and that the tax increase caught her off guard since there had not been previous discussion of options. Thinks the ideas that have been laid out are good ones and that we need to have the City involved. City has to be the one to contact them. It is tough for Kate to do this by herself without some form of authority by the City. Feels there are people who are willing to do the leg work. We don't know if it is going to cost more? It might not cost more? It might cost a little more but feels that we should still explore the options and have conversations that include the City.

Mayor Thornton stated that only a small portion of our citizens show up to the meetings. It is City Council's job to do what in the best interest of all citizens. As stated at last meeting you will see how interested citizens are when they have their skin into the game. As mentioned at last meeting if we took it to a vote to raise taxes, we would find out who has skin in the game and who is willing to step up to the plate. Nobody responded. If the City ends up paying anything at all we will have to get more than just a handful to show whether they are for or against. Received 3 emails after last meeting stating that they are against the tax hike. We need to get an official way to receive the citizens input. That was the intent of this meeting and beating the deadline today to put on the November ballot. We still have time to review options before the vote but were trying to beat the deadline. Was sent information from the City Attorney stating we have missed the July deadline. We could vote to put it on the ballot, but it would be on the ballot for next fiscal year and does not make sense to do it.

Ginger Burkholder states that it is her understating that the C-6 contract renews again in 2022. Can we keep the Item on the Agenda for the August 25 so that Kate can make her additional presentation and reconsider at that time what future action might be?

Mayor Thornton states that Kate had 20 minutes to give her presentation which was more time than most. If we are not going to do anything for a while it would be best for her to get as much information as she can and submit it to Council and go from there. Placing a Council Person with her if it helps her get information. If we can get Grants and it allows somebody else to pay for it that would be fantastic. Council voted to stop recycling until things change. Mayor Thornton stated that he has all of C-6 information, emails and quotes. We have all the information we need from C-6 but George has stated that nothing has changed at this point and could possibly go up for tipping fees. We are bound by C-6.

Susan Sloan stated that she would like to consider different options.

Mayor Thornton stated that what was voted on last year was several different options that Mayor Howard put forward. One was going to once a week trash pick-up and end recycling. Citizens did not want to do that. Second was that C-6 has the contract with us and if they have a service available then we have to use them for that service.

Council member Verity asks that we cannot do anything more with recycling until our contract with C-6 is up? If we came up with other options, it would have to be after our contract with C-6 has ended?

Mayor Thornton stated that this is correct.

Council member Poss asked if C-6 would agree to provide us with recycling if the City will sponsor. How do we get the City to sponsor it and not leave the City with the bill? First thing that has to be answered is how many people are truly interested. Kate did a good job at doing her outreach, but it wasn't a full outreach. Believes that if we put everything into it and get a better outreach we could determine if we could get at least 60 households. That way if we get 60 and 30 boot then we are not leaving the City stuck with the bill. Before we go to C-6, how many people would commit, fill out a form with full identity. Suggest that before 2022 we have to get the numbers.

Council member Darst feels we are missing a piece of conversation. The City spends more money on garbage and recycling than it takes in through property taxes. George Cantu (President of C-6) approached us and suggested to wait until the market stabilizes. He was concerned about the state of recycling and pointed out that he could not present a definitive cost because the cost was changing so rapidly and the process has changed. Garbage is not going to China it is going straight to the landfill. It is no longer a sought after commodity. He suggested to wait until the market stabilizes he said that he can only predict from his 20 yrs. of being in the industry that in about 2-3 yrs it would correct itself. So Council choose to make it count and make sure we are getting our return on our investment which exceeds the amount of property tax that the City collects. At that time we looked at several different options of changing trash verses recycle a voted to discontinue recycling services until the industry stabilized itself. That decision was made in October of 2019 and for those that might not have been part of that conversation. On the City standpoint, seeing Kate putting so much time and effort into researching other avenues, as Council we need to not waste anyone's time in thinking that the City is going to represent them as a bargaining tool for a recycle program. She suggest that we do not change our mind on not recycling until the market stabilizes. If citizens want to pursue recycling absolutely, Council is not stopping anyone from recycling, just without the City. Recycling can be taken to other areas. Encouraging on behalf of the City that we are going to reverse the decision she does not believe that is honoring the time of our citizens. Putting on the Agenda again with a plan to say yes or no to with the City being involved then that's fine. Hates to waste peoples time. Job as Council is to provide for infrastructure and safety of our citizens. We have serious issues with both of those. We have mail theft, federal theft issues going on in our mailboxes and failed roadways. There are more issues with recycling then just recycling. Citizens have asked for dumpsters but who is in charge of cleaning them? Who's in charge of Monitoring them? Who's in charge of making sure it is single, double or triple stream? All are City employees. When looking at cost we need to look at cost of time of employees. Would like to see these numbers in a formal presentation. Considering it on a ballot cost money for Bexar County to run an election for us. Feels there are so many other things than just the recycling aspect. Service provider reached out to us and he is the expert.

Mayor Thornton stated that Republic ended George's contract and increased his rates. He states that if you can get at least 60 people to sign up then

Council member Poss asks Mayor Thornton if he feels that C-6 will deal with independents? Her understanding is that they only wanted to deal with the City and if the City would sponsor.

Mayor Thornton states that George does not want to deal with a lot of individuals calling but feels if there is a Council person that wants to volunteer their time to be the point of contact but not negotiating anything to do with the City but saving to George that we have 60 people and according to your rate it will be this amount. If you have the signatures, the process and everything when could be start?

Ginger Burkholder stated that is what Kate was trying to do but had started out first on Next Door but not everybody in Grey Forest is on Next Door. States that a postcard with 3 questions would be a good place to start.

Mayor Thornton states that individually is not a problem it is when everybody starts calling. Read George's email that said:

21 residence called in of the 21 that signed up

15 paid \$60.66 per quarter based on what all 21 would pay

When all 21 didn't pay he had to call the 15 that did and tell them it went to \$110.12

When price went up 5 said never mind. Then had to call the ones left and tell them \$158.58 per quarter

This is George's fear that 60 people opt in then they drop out. There is still a cost for him.

Council member Darst calls Donna Gottwald out asking what she was saying. Auerelia Scharnhorst spoke up stating that she had said that she called up and asked how many had joined. The man that she spoke with was not George and he told her that we had 15 people and need 16 and said it was \$110.00 if we get to 20 it will go down to \$60.00. So she signed up and later that day he called back and said that they were canceling indefinitely. Council member Darst asked he explained why it was being cancelled. Auerelia stated that he said there were 5 people that wanted to do it and he hadn't been able to contact them. Auerelia stated she put it out on Next Door and got about 16 people who said they would do it so she asked them to call him.

Council member Darst left at 6:41 p.m.

Mayor Thornton stated that if there are people interested then Kate needs to be talking to more people and find out how many and we can go back to George.

Mandie Waldrop asks if the City pay for it?

Mayor Thornton stated that anybody will take something if somebody else will pay for it.

Council member Nottingham stated that it sounds like a Council person is needed for support to get more information for a Grant.

Council member Verity states that we could find out about the Grant and what all it involves.

Susan Beavin said that George stated at the meeting that the recycle is going to the landfill. She wants to know where it is going.

Mayor Thornton stated that George takes it to Republic and China is not taking it now. He feels like Kate needs to get the work out and get the number of people truly interested and then we sit down with George. If people want to get involved in recycling and it doesn't have to involve the City at all.

Council member Poss is happy to help and without a good effort is not willing to stop. We are really stuck with C-6 and feels the first question we have to ask is find out how many are truly committed.

Ginger Burkholder asks Council member Poss asks if you are willing to officially be a liaison on behalf of the City assisting Kate as a private citizen looking for solutions for recycling?

Council member Poss states yes, upon Mayor Thornton's approval. Mayor Thornton stated as long as it is not tying the City to any of the contracts.

Mandie Waldrop asks if that is not the goal of the City to umbrella and protect and serve its citizens. She feels the attitude is not the responsibility. She states that it is the City's very responsibility that is the reason that we incorporated & became a municipality 60 years ago so that we could provide an umbrella and service it and protect the citizens. Weather that is to have Police or prevent San Antonio from encroaching or to sign a contract for recycling. It doesn't matter is it all the same thing that is the point of an incorporation.

Council member Poss states that those services in any other City is paid for by the citizens.

Mandie states that we are not every other City and that we get a huge amount of money from Grey Forest Utilities so that per citizen those dollar amounts are distributed. The reason that the Utility was founded was to take care of those things.

Mayor Thornton states that he doesn't believe that the Utility was founded to pay for everything for the citizens. He feels it was developed to provide an income for the City.

Council member Nottingham stated that it was a lucky fluke that they needed a line from San Antonio to Boerne and we were in the way, so we got a gas utility. Nobody had any idea that it would ever bring us this kind of money.

Mandie stated that even in those years when it was touch and go, why didn't taxes get raised at that point?

Council member Nottingham states that the taxes were as high as they could have been and we have been rolling them back every year since she has been on Council.

Mandie stated that she went over the 2020 budget from the website and she found it was \$54,000 for garbage services that is less than .27 per person per day. That was recycling and trash that is very low.

Mayor Thornton stated that recycling was not on the 2020 budget. Next years budget we will be losing sales tax revenue. GFU is down for the year and we have lost Grey Moss Inn sales and liquor tax. Our 5% that we got from GFU will be gone where we are losing from taxes.

Council member Verity states that what we have in our City Budget is not a huge amount of money. We don't pay anybody \$80 plus an hour per your post on Next Door. What we have in our budget is sufficient to run our City we do not have tons of extra money and presented the budget last year to everybody so that they could see where the money goes and that it is very transparent. There is not tons of extra money laying around for repairs and various projects. We are trying to improve the community and bring the community together, but it is not like we have a huge budget it is under a million dollars to run the City.

Mandie stated that they could talk about it after the meeting.

Mayor Thornton stated that this meeting is only here to take a vote to give the citizens a vote in November. Will not have recycling on the 25th and wait to see what Kate can come up with.

There was no further business. Mayor Thornton adjourned the Special Council Meeting at 7:02 p.m.

These minutes were written/recorded by

Joni Baker for Shannan Kinsley

These minutes were approved as written/amended on the 25th day of September, 2020.

22nd

Signed: 

Charles M. Thornton, Mayor